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CO-OP ELECTRIFICATION ADVISER TRAINING OUTLINE

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GETTING NEWS TO MEMBERS
NEWSLETTERS AND
STATE PAPER COLUMNS

REA

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION

U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PURPOSES OF THIS OUTLINE

This is one of a series of outlines prepared by REA as an aid in planning and arranging training schools for co-op electrification advisers. Each outline deals with a power use subject or with some aspect of cooperative principles and practice or with a particular method or technique of getting information to people. These are the three principal fields in which electrification advisers need to be skilled. Each booklet contains both suggested subject matter and suggestions as to how the material might be presented, with an indication of a suitable time schedule. The booklet is

thus useful as a guide to committees in charge of training schools, as an aid to the instructors, and as a subject matter manual that may be distributed to participants at the close of a training session for study and future reference. Subjects available or in preparation are listed below by title and number. It is suggested that committees planning such training schools keep in mind the need of training in all three types of subject matter and, insofar as practicable, make use of the outlines in a balanced combination.

LIST OF SUBJECTS

An ORIENTATION OUTLINE (unnumbered) covers all three fields of information. It is to provide the subject matter for an initial school that will give co-op officials basic background information and an understanding of the nature and scope of the educational job to be done.

NO.	POWER USE SUBJECT	NO.	CO-OP SUBJECT	NO.	METHOD OR TECHNIQUE
1	Farm and home Wiring	100	Value of Co-op	200	Getting News to Members
2	Farm Motors		Membership		(Newsletters and State
3	Water Systems and Plumbing	101	Integrating Power Use and Co-op	201	Paper Columns)
4	Electric Ranges		Education	202	Using the Radio
5	Laundry Equipment	102	The REA Program		Co-op Reports and Non-
6	Poultry Production		and Co-ops	203	periodical Publications
7	Refrigerators, Home Freezers, Walk-Ins	103	The Electric Co-op — What It Is	204	Making Effective Talks
8	Small Appliances	104	The Co-op Movement — Here and Abroad	205	Demonstration Techniques
9	Dairying			206	Methods and Results of
10	Pig Brooding	105	Co-op Bylaws		Adult Education
11	Farm, Home and School Lighting	106	Establishing Member Ownership	207	Effective Meetings
12	Farm Shop	107	Assuring Member Participation		Photography and Motion
13	Pump Irrigation			208	Pictures
14	Garden Watering	108	Co-op Tax Status	209	Working with Newspapers
15	Electric Hotbeds	109	Annual Meetings	210	Exhibits and displays
16	Elevating, cleaning and grading farm crops	110	Co-op's Place in the Community	211	Working with Rural Youth
17	Drying grain, hay, peanuts, etc	111	Cooperation Between Co-ops		Working with Community
18	Heating, cooling, ventilating				Organizations
19	Cleaners, dish washers				
20	Kitchen planning				

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Rural Electrification Administration
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SUGGESTED PROGRAM AND PROCEDURE

Getting News to Members (Newsletters and State
Paper Columns)

Regular communication with the members is a basic feature of the co-op education program. For an electric co-op, the best medium for this purpose is the locally prepared newsletter, a local news column in the State association newspaper, if there is one, or both.

Suggested Procedure. The following outline shows how a one-day training session might be conducted with the purpose of helping electrification advisers start or improve monthly newsletters. The same techniques discussed can be used in preparing a monthly column of news for a State association paper.

Instructors. The leader for the day should be experienced in the publication of newsletters or house organs. It is desirable, too, that he be well informed about the REA program and the operation of electric co-ops. A State paper editor or a State Extension Service staff member will usually be a good choice. It will help if he can have present to assist him, at least during parts of the day, other experienced people, such as a local editor or newspaperman, a manager or electrification adviser who puts out a good newsletter, and a printer. If the group is interested in newsletters printed by the offset method, it is quite important to have an offset printer present.

Subject Matter. If these leaders want subject matter help, an outline covering this subject in some detail is attached. At the close of the meeting, it may be desirable to distribute the subject matter outline to the participants for reference and further study. Extra copies can be provided for this purpose.

Preparation. For maximum effectiveness of this session, the room should be large enough to seat all participants at desks or tables. Ask advisers to bring with them the following material:

- a. Notes for stories, particularly basic information about the co-op -- names of officers and directors, a name for their publication (if their co-op does not publish a letter), names and telephone numbers of persons who are called in the event of line trouble, the co-op's latest operating report, and information about the location of present construction.
- b. Paper, pencil, ruler, paste, scissors, and if possible, a typewriter.
- c. Pictures relating to co-op work or personnel, if available. A shot of the office building, the board of directors or a map of the co-op's power system is good kick-off material.
- d. Copies of newsletters published in the past.

Suggested Program and Procedure (Cont.)

Getting News to Members (Newsletters and State
Paper Columns)

Morning Session

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker or Leader</u>
9:00	<u>Introductions.</u> It is suggested that the chairman of the State Power Use Committee, or someone acting as host, explain the purpose of the school and introduce those who are to speak and help in conducting the workshop.	State power use chairman
9:15	<u>Talk, "Why a Member Publication".</u> It is suggested that the group leader take over at this point with a brief talk on the various means a co-op can use to reach members and the community with information. This leads into a discussion of the advantages and purposes of a newsletter or the equivalent.	Group leader (see preceding page)
9:45	<u>Talk, "What Makes a Good Newsletter or News Column"</u> Group leader presents the local editor and/or State editor for a short talk about the importance of names and pictures and other factors in building reader interest -- the key to the success of any publication.	Community editor or publisher; State editor.
10:00	<u>Discussion, "Types of Newsletters,"</u> conducted by Group leader now opens up a discussion of the various types of newsletter reproduction generally used by co-ops -- offset printing; stencil duplicating; and letter press. He passes out, for comment, samples of newsletters duplicated by these methods. Now the printer comes into the discussion. If the group is interested in offset printing, the printer explains this method, discusses make-up techniques, prices, etc. (Note: If no printer is present, an experienced adviser can handle this topic.)	Group leader and printer.
10:45	Intermission	

Suggested Program and Procedure (Cont.)

Morning Session

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker or Leader</u>
11:00	<u>Panel Discussion</u> , "Contents of a Newsletter or News Column" Division of topics among panel members might be: a. Stories and features to carry regularly . . . b. Stories and features to carry occasionally. c. Tips for items in member publications. . .	Group leader Newspaperman Extension Journalist
11:30	<u>Discussion</u> , "Sources of Member News" Conducted by	Group leader
	To close the morning session, group leader -- using a blackboard -- asks for suggestions as to story sources. There are dozens of sources. If discussion should lag, a reasonably complete list will be found in subject matter outline.	
12:00	Noon recess	

Afternoon Session

1:30 Work Session on Newsletters or State Paper Columns.

During this session participants prepare actual newsletters from notes they have brought with them. Supervisors can be the group leaders, experienced advisers, and outside specialists who have appeared on programs. Each specialist can be responsible for working with a group of the advisers being trained.

Suggested Workshop Procedure

1. The supervisors instruct their groups:
 - a. To go over their notes, get their stories in mind.
 - b. Write as they talk.
 - c. Avoid trying to be journalistic.

Suggested Program and Procedure (Cont.)

Afternoon Session

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker or Leader</u>
Suggested Workshop Procedure (Cont.)		
	2. The advisers prepare newsletter items from their notes.	
	3. Supervisors read copy, explaining each addition and correction to the writer. He shows them:	
	a. How to count units for headings. b. How to slug copy. c. How to judge the length of copy. d. How to read copy.	
	4. Supervisors then help the writers make up their newsletters. They point out such things as:	
	a. The value of readability. b. How to judge the value of a story. c. How to lay out a page.	
	5. The object is that at the end of this time, each adviser will have a newsletter ready, or substantially ready, for duplication, or a column of news as it would be sent to the State paper.	
	6. If time permits, finished newsletter layouts may be exchanged at random among participants for comment.	
4:30 or Next Day	<u>Trip to Printing Plant.</u> It is suggested that the latter part of the training session be used to inspect a printing plant -- an offset plant if the group is interested in that method of duplicating; a newspaper plant or printer's shop if letter-press printing is generally used; or a shop specializing in stencil duplicating. If the meeting is held in the city where the State paper is printed, it will be a natural for this visit.	
	This inspection trip should be conducted by the person in charge of the plant or shop.	

END OF PROGRAM. SUGGESTED SUBJECT MATTER FOLLOWS.

SUGGESTED SUBJECT MATTER

Getting News to Members (Newsletters and State
Paper Columns)

A. Why a Member Publication.

1. To build a stronger cooperative -- Good, regular communication between the co-op management and members stimulates discussion about co-op affairs, creates interest in the affairs and simultaneously builds co-op spirit and loyalty.
2. To aid management -- By keeping members informed of co-op affairs, the co-op management stimulates member activities that often lighten the burden of management and even lower its costs. Announcements in newsletters and State paper columns also save time and eliminate the mailing of special letters, sometimes costing as much as a newsletter. A South Carolina co-op recently announced in its newsletter that a section of its line serving about 200 members would be out of service on a certain date at a certain time to permit maintenance work. Although about 50 members on this section of lines had telephones, not one call was made to the office inquiring as to what the trouble was. The newsletter announcement was effective. Work in the office, as well as in the field, went ahead uninterrupted. Newsletters reduce the number of late meter cards, provide a vehicle for power use program.
3. To permit informed business decisions -- the cooperative is a business organization. It belongs exclusively to its members, and as owners of the business they are entitled to a regular monthly report on its operation.
4. To provide information about power use. A co-op's job is only started when it makes electricity available to a farm. It is completed only when the farmer is making the most beneficial use of his electricity. The newsletter or column provides an economical and effective medium for disseminating power use information.

B. What Makes a Good Newsletter or News Column.

1. Readability. The typography must lend itself to easy reading. Hard-to-read publications are nearly worthless. Avoid small type in jammed up columns. Avoid too-wide columns. Give the text type and the heading type air (white space) to breathe.
2. Attractive Makeup. The appearance of the letter or column has much to do with the reader's decision to read it or throw it away. First, it must be neat. Second, it must attract attention. This can be done with the use of type properly displayed and with pictures, cartoons, or charts.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

3. Reader Interest. This is that something which makes a person want to read a publication or a particular column. Creating reader interest, then, is of major importance. For years, editors have applied these techniques to achieve reader interest:

- a. Liberal use of names. This puts the publication on a personal basis. It is natural that people want to know what other people are doing. Also, nearly everybody likes to see his name in print.
- b. Liberal use of pictures. A picture can tell a story of many words and often can do it more effectively.
- c. Use of a simple, easily understood writing style. Many successful editors write just as they talk to the man on the street. They never write "up" to their readers or "down" to them.
- d. Accurate, factual reporting. To exist and to be of influence, a publication or news column must establish a reputation for honesty and reliability in its reporting. Accuracy builds reader interest; **inaccuracy** destroys it.
- e. Use of information that will help the reader improve himself and his community.
- f. Use of information that is entertaining, that gives the lighter side of life.
- g. Use of information that features human interest, the sort of information that has universal appeal.

C. Three types of newsletter reproduction are generally used by cooperatives.

1. Offset printing. This type is generally recommended by REA. REA recommends it because of its readability and because local pictures can be used at little added cost. Offset newsletters cost more than mimeographed newsletters when printed in quantities of less than 1,000, but printed in large quantities the cost is about the same or less. In nearly all cases, especially when three or four or more pictures are used, they cost less than ordinary printed letters.
2. Stencil duplicating. This type (principal trade name is mimeograph) is the lowest in cost for small co-ops, but probably the least effective. Photographs cannot be used and the appearance of the publication is rarely very impressive and sometimes rather shoddy. They have little intrinsic **appeal**. Faulty reproduction often makes them unreadable.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

3. Letter press. For readability this type, which is ordinary printing, is superior, but it is the most expensive. The cost of engravings almost prohibits use of local pictures necessary for an attractive and effective publication.

D. Contents of a Newsletter or News Column.

1. Stories and Features to carry regularly are:

- a. Report on the last meeting of the Board of Directors: Resolutions adopted, other business transacted, and problems discussed.
- b. Manager's column of informal chat about current co-op affairs.
- c. Comparative monthly operating report, condensed to chief items and occupying not more than a quarter-column. This should include a statement of taxes paid. It may be desirable periodically to explain the meaning of some of the items in this report.
- d. Report on construction progress: Work on new sections, improvements made on old sections, new construction contracts, new REA loan applications filed, REA loan application approvals.
- e. List of new members.
- f. An appliance exchange or "trading post" column if members want it and if it does not jeopardize co-op relations with local newspapers. This is usually appropriate only in newsletters.
- g. A "mail bag" column for letters from readers, commenting on service, co-op policies, and co-op problems.
- h. News notes about linemen and office personnel.
- i. An honor roll of members who perform voluntary actions of value to the co-op: Report outages, pull the truck out of the mud, report stopped meters, warn of dangerous conditions, sign up new members, and so on.
- j. List of the ten top users of electricity and special mention of any newcomer to the top ten.
- k. Report on major outages, their causes and correction. Also any other important maintenance developments.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

1. A headline or "box" reminding members of the next meter reading date. (The use of a dog house list to discourage delinquent meter reading sometimes offends members and a list of those who do not pay their bills is not in good taste and of doubtful legality and they should not be used in State paper columns. An alternative might be an occasional story about the total amount of delinquent accounts, or the names of the first ten to pay their bills.)
- m. List of new equipment installed by specific members, or -- better -- a series of short narrative items containing this information.
- n. At least one good local story, dealing with an unusual use of electricity on the co-op's lines, a rural industry made possible by co-op electric power, or other subject matter designed to promote the use of electricity by members. With offset printing, it is possible to illustrate this story with local photographs at little expense.
- o. A list of the names and telephone numbers of maintenance men: also the names of directors and office personnel if space permits.

2. Stories and features for a newsletter to carry occasionally are:

- a. Sketches of directors, and office and maintenance personnel, illustrated by individual or group pictures. The purpose of these sketches is to acquaint members with employees. In items about directors, include a report on how they use electricity.
- b* Stories about seasonal installations, like pig and chick brooders, hay hoists, hay driers, barn fans and water warmers. A roundup story telling how many of these seasonal installations are in operation on the co-op lines is good copy when their value as a production device and their economy and simplicity of operation are explained by one or two or more farmers.
- c* Articles containing news and comments on important anniversaries of the co-op and of REA -- anniversary of the co-op's incorporation, anniversary of energization and anniversary of REA (established in May 1935). Such articles should carry comparative data as to number of members served, miles of line in operation and average power consumption.
- d. Stories about the filing of applications for new REA loans, giving the amount, the number of members to be served, where they live, number of miles of lines to be constructed and the general use farmers in the area will make of their electricity.

* These are leads for feature stories in State papers.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

- e. Stories about the approval of applications for loans.
- f. Stories publicizing the annual meeting; beginning with notices six to 12 months in advance; and stories reporting on it afterward.
- g. Articles giving safety information, like proper grounding of motors in damp places. Stories regarding unsafe conditions as reported by members make excellent copy. Stories about near accidents and methods of accident prevention are also effective.
- h. Articles designed to orient new members. Some co-ops prefer to use a special letter addressed to new members only, but even old members are interested in knowing more about co-op principles, rules and regulations.
- i* Stories about local schools, 4-H clubs and FFA clubs when their activities concern rural electrification and power uses.

3. Tips for items in member-publications.

The more specific you make these farm and home stories, the better they will be. Editorial statements fill space, but do not have the effect and interest of experience stories. The best way to stimulate use of electricity on the farm is one farmer telling another.

a. Items from or about members:

- (1*) Using unusual equipment, such as chicken debeakers, barn cleaners and hoists of various designs.
- (2*) Using homemade equipment and appliances, such as pig and chick brooders, egg coolers, feed mixers, cement mixers and motor toters.
- (3.) Adding to their farmstead wiring system to accomodate new equipment and appliances.
- (4.) Buying new appliances.
- (5*) Telling how electricity is appreciated (before-and-after contrast).

b.* Items from or about members showing how the use of electricity on the farm:

- (1.) Increases income. Since obtaining co-op electricity many farmers have greatly increased their dairy, poultry and live-stock operations. Others have augmented their income by addition of one or more of these enterprises.

* These are leads for feature stories in State papers.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

- (2.) Lowers operating costs by reducing labor needs.
- (3.) Increases opportunity for farm specialization. In addition to dairy, poultry and livestock farming, farmers have specialized in the growing of sweet potatoes, using the hotbeds to culture plants. Others have specialized in the growing of vegetables and fruits on land irrigated with the aid of electric pumps.
- (4.) Tends to keep young people on the farm by affording opportunities for steady incomes, modern living and elimination of many of the hardships of farm life.
- (5.) Produces more food for national abundance.
- (6.) Lengthens work hours of short winter days by providing light for the barn, barnyard, machine shop and other buildings.

c.* Items from and about members showing the use of electricity in the home:

- (1) Eliminates drudgery, especially for the farm wife who uses modern appliances.
- (2) Provides new income, as by accumulating sale cream in a refrigerator, facilitating the preparation of farm products for sale, such as baked goods and poultry.
- (3) Brings new comforts.
- (4) Creates leisure hours for better living.
- (5) Makes for better health by providing the means to preserve food and eliminate unsanitary conditions.

d.* Items about specific rural industries on the co-op lines showing their importance in creating:

- (1) New employment for rural people.
- (2) New wealth for rural communities.
- (3) Community growth and development.

E. Sources of Member News.

1. Standard operating reports and records.
2. Minutes of Board of Directors meetings.
3. Over-the-counter conversations when members drop in at the office. Try furnishing employees pads on which to jot down news items, and a central drawer or box to drop them in.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

4. Comments at member meetings.
5. Telephone conversations with members when they call in about outages or for any other reasons.
6. Field and inspection trips.
7. "Remarks" space or any blank space on meter cards which may be used for consumer comment.
8. Information gathered by lineman.
9. Farmers who are among high users. Select a new name each month, write to ask what appliances and equipment he has, and publish the answer.
10. Appliance and farm equipment dealers and possibly wiring contractors.
11. Members who serve as neighborhood, school or club correspondents for the newsletter.
12. Asking in the newsletter or column for letters and news items from members. This is more effective when tied to some specific item -- "Can you top this?"
13. Getting some school class or classes to provide items as a work project in English, journalism or civics.



